

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BONN 05243 01 OF 03 242153Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----242217Z 088223 /72

O O 242142Z MAR 77 ZFF 4
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6795
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 05243

EXDIS

USMISSION NATO ALSO NIACT IMMEDIATE FOR SECDEF BROWN
DEPARTMENT PASS AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE TO SECDEF
IMMEDIATE AND USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, OCON, MILL, AWACS, GW, MPOL, PARM
SUBJ: MY CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER ON EVE OF NATO
MINISTERIAL.

REF: (A) BONN 4954 DTG 211634Z MAR 77, (B) BONN 4938
DTG 211239 Z MAR 77, (C) STATE 61976, (D) BONN 4956
DTG 211643Z MAR 77, (E) STATE 64721 DTG 232227 Z MAR 77

1. SUMMARY: I SAW MINISTER LEBER ON THE EVE OF HIS
DEPARTURE FOR THE MEETING OF DEFENSE MINISTERS IN
BRUSSELS. HE CONFIRMED THE EXCELLENT IMPRESSION
THAT HE HAD RECEIVED DURING HIS AMERICAN VISIT LAST
WEEK. ON THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF AWACS, HE GAVE NO
INDICATION THAT HE HAD MADE PROGRESS IN CONVINCING
THE CHANCELLOR TO ALLOW HIM TO MAKE A TRULY POSITIVE
STATEMENT TOMORROW. THE FACT THAT LEBER IS PLAYING
HIS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST IS ALSO CLEAR, HOWEVER.

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ON THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROGRAM, LEBER IS CON-
VINCED BOTH THAT THE UK 120 MM RIFLED-BORE GUN WILL
NOT BE READY THIS YEAR AND THAT THE US 105 MM GUN
HAS REACHED THE END OF ITS DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL.
THUS, HE FEELS THE US WILL SOONER OR LATER HAVE TO
ADOPT THE GERMAN 120 MM SMOOTH-BORE GUN. END SUMMARY.

2. I SPENT AN HOUR WITH MINISTER LEBER EARLY THURSDAY EVENING. THE WAY HE DESCRIBED HIS RECENT AMERICAN VISIT FULLY CONFIRMED HIS SUBORDINATES' REPORTS (REFTELS A AND B) OF HOW PLEASED HE HAD BEEN WITH HIS AMERICAN RECEPTION. HE WANTED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO BE SURE THAT I WAS AWARE OF ALL THE TOP ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HE HAD MET.

AWACS

3. I SPENT SOME TIME PROBING IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT WHAT SUCCESS LEBER HAD HAD IN OBTAINING THE CHANCELLOR'S AGREEMENT FOR HIM TO MAKE A POSITIVE STATEMENT AT THE MARCH 25 MINISTERIAL (REFTEL C). WHAT LEBER TOLD ME WAS NOT PARTICULARLY REASSURING. HE APPARENTLY HAS NOT SEEN THE CHANCELLOR SINCE HIS RETURN. HE HAS BRIEFED THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE OF THE BUNDESTAG AS TO THE RESULTS OF HIS AMERICAN VISIT AND DISCUSSED AWACS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER WHEN THEY MET IN WASHINGTON.

4. THE POSITIVE SIDE, LEBER HIMSELF REMAINS COMMITTED TO AWACS. HE MENTIONED HOW IMPRESSED HE HAD BEEN BY THE AWACS BRIEFING HE HAD BEEN GIVEN BY AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL JONES. HE SAID HE FOUND THE GENERAL HIMSELF TO BE CONVINCED OF THE VALUE OF AWACS AND PERSUASIVE IN CONVINCING OTHERS OF ITS VALUE. PARENTHETICALLY, LEBER REMARKED "YOUR PRESIDENT HAS A VERY GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF AWACS, BUT MY
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CHANCELLOR HAS NOT EVEN BEGUN TO BUILD SUCH A KNOWLEDGE."

5. I ASKED IF LEBER HAD BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF AN AWACS DEMONSTRATION FOR GERMANY WHILE IN WASHINGTON, AND THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE HAD (REFTEL D). HE SAID IT SHOULD BE SHOWN AND BRIEFED TO THE CHANCELLOR AND TO BUNDESTAG MEMBERS OF THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES. HOWEVER, LEBER HAD NO SPECIFIC TIMES TO SUGGEST YET. HE PROMISED TO LET THE EMBASSY KNOW WHEN HE FELT THE TIME WAS RIPE, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE DEMONSTRATION BE DESIGNATED AN "EXERCISE".

6. WE DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF THE FRG SHARE OF AN EVENTUAL AWACS PROGRAM IN SOME DETAIL. LEBER GAVE THE IMPRESSION HE LOOKED UPON THE QUESTION AS A KIND OF POKER GAME, ALTHOUGH HE CALLED IT A "JIGSAW PUZZLE".

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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EXDIS

HE SAID THAT IF HE WANTED TO KILL AWACS, ALL HE WOULD HAVE TO DO WOULD BE TO ACCEDE TO UK DEFENSE MINISTER MULLEY'S WISHES AND MAKE A POSITIVE PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO ATTEMPT TO GET HIS GOVERNMENT TO PAY 26 PERCENT OF THE COST. THIS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A US COMMITMENT TO PAY 33 PERCENT, AND SO ALMOST 60 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL COST WOULD BE COVERED. THIS WOULD TURN THE PROJECT INTO A JOINT US/FRG ONE. THE UK'S REACTION WOULD BE UNCERTAIN, BUT THE OTHER NATO ALLIES WOULD WASH THEIR HANDS OF THE SUBJECT. I ARGUED THAT IT MIGHT RATHER INDUCE THEM TO BE FORTHCOMING, BUT LEBER REMAINED UNCONVINCED.

7. CONTINUING WITH HIS LINE OF ARGUMENT, LEBER SAID THAT MULLEY HAD TOLD HIM THE LAST TIME THEY MET THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH FOR THE FRG TO SAY IT WAS FOR AWACS IN PRINCIPLE. NOR WOULD IT BE ENOUGH FOR THE FRG TO PLEDGE A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL COST. THE UK REQUIRED GUARANTEES THAT 100 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL FUNDING WAS ASSURED. LEBER ADDED "I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT MULLEY WANTS. IN ANY CASE, I'LL FIND OUT AS I AM HAVING BREAKFAST WITH HIM TOMORROW."

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8. WE ALSO DISCUSSED POSSIBLE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE AWACS PROGRAM. LEBER SAID HE COULD NOT IMAGINE FRANCE NOT BEING INTERESTED. MOREOVER, IF FRANCE WERE TO BENEFIT FROM AWACS, IT MUST ALSO HELP PAY FOR IT. LEBER WENT ON TO SAY THAT AWACS MUST HAVE FRENCH PARTICIPATION TO BE A NATO PROJECT. (I DID NOT PRESS HIM FURTHER ON THIS ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM FOR FEAR THAT HE MIGHT DECIDE TO MAKE FRENCH PARTICIPATION A CONDITION FOR FRG PARTICIPATION).

9. LEBER CLOSED OUR AWACS DISCUSSION WITH HIS WELL-KNOWN PLEAS FOR MORE TIME. IN THIS CONNECTION HE NOTED THAT THE GERMAN AIR FORCE HAD NOT ESTABLISHED AN OFFICIAL REQUIREMENT FOR AWACS. UNTIL IT DID, HE RAN THE RISK OF HAVING THE BUNDESTAG COMMITTEE ASK HIM SARCASTICALLY IF THE REQUIREMENT HAD BEEN SET BY THE AMERICANS. THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE ARMED FORCES WAS, ON THE OTHER HAND, IN FAVOR OF AWACS, AND THE GERMAN AIR FORCE COULD BE CONVINCED. ONLY IT WOULD TAKE TIME.

THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROBLEM

10. AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, MINISTER LEBER'S MARCH 18 NEWS CONFERENCE MADE IT SOUND AS IF THERE WERE NO LIKELIHOOD OF THE US ADOPTING THE 105 MM GUN WITH ITS IMPROVED AMMUNITION FOR THE XM 1 (REFTEL A). IN OUR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROBLEM, HE INITIALLY TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE CHOICE WAS ONLY BETWEEN THE EXISTING 120 MM GERMAN SMOOTH-BORE GUN AND THE 120 MM BRITISH RIFLED-BORE GUN WHICH IS ONLY ON THE DRAWING BOARDS.

11. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT THE HILLIS RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE (WITH WHICH HE WAS THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR), HE TOOK A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT SECRET

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TACK. HE MAINTAINED THAT THE UK GUN WOULD NOT BE READY FOR PRODUCTION UNTIL 1981 OR 1982 AND SO COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED. THE US HAD AGREED NOT TO WAIT BEYOND 1977 FOR THE BRITISH GUN. IT WAS POSSIBLE, HE

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SAID, THAT THE US 105 MM GUN WITH ITS DEPLETED
URANIUM SHELL MIGHT DO AS WELL AS THE GERMAN 120 MM
GUN AS IT IS TODAY. THUS, THE US MIGHT NOT ADOPT THE
GERMAN 120 MM GUN RIGHT AWAY.

12. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT THE US TANK TURRET
WAS CAPABLE OF TAKING EITHER THE 105 MM OR THE 120 MM
GUN. THE 105 MM GUN WAS IN HIS VIEW AT THE END OF ITS
DEVELOPMENT CYCLE, WHILE THE GERMAN GUN WAS ONLY AT
THE BEGINNING OF ITS. AND LEBER WAXED ALMOST LYRICAL
AS HE SPOKE OF THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE 120
MM. HIS CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE US SOONER OR LATER
WOULD HAVE TO ADOPT THE 120 MM GERMAN SMOOTH-BORE.
AS LONG AS THE TANK TURRET WAS DUAL CAPABLE, THIS
WAS CERTAIN.

MOU ON RECIPROCAL PROCUREMENT

13. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL MINISTER LEBER
OF US READINESS TO DEVELOP A US/FRG PROCUREMENT MOU
ALONG THE LINES OF THE ONE WE HAVE WITH THE UK
(REFTEL E). LEBER EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION AND SAID
WE SHOULD ESTABLISH A SMALL AD HOC WORKING GROUP
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ON THE SUBJECT.

CONCLUSION

14. LEBER ENDED OUR DISCUSSION BY SAYING AGAIN THAT HIS TRIP TO AMERICA HAD BEEN VERY GOOD AND VERY SUCCESSFUL. HE ALSO REMARKED WHAT AN EXCELLENT IMPRESSION THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE ON HIM. STOESSEL

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